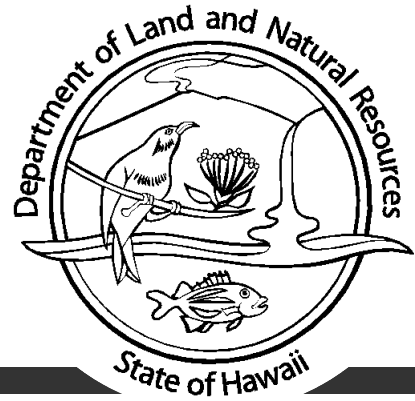


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NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Deborah Ward, 587-0320 (pgr. 363-0448)
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DLNR ADDS BARGE TO KUALOA ARTIFICIAL REEF

Tomorrow, Wednesday, February 16, pending favorable weather, Department of Land and Natural Resources will add a small barge to the Kualoa Artificial Reef. The reef, located one mile off Ka'a'awa, O'ahu, is one of five in the State designed to provide new habitat for marine life. For safety reasons, fishermen, boaters, and divers are asked to stay clear of the barge and the reef site. During the operations, the target area will be clearly marked with surface floats.

Healy Tibbitts Builders, Inc. have donated a contaminant-free steel barge to DLNR's Artificial Reef Program. They plan to tow the barge from Kane'ohe Bay to a designated site at the Kualoa Artificial Reef, and scuttle it in depths of 70 to 90 feet. The barge is approximately 60 feet long by 30 feet wide.

"In recent months we have added several barge loads of donated concrete habitat forms to the Kualoa Reef, the first additions in five years. These habitats give fish and other marine species new homes to live in, and also expand opportunities for Hawai'i's fishermen and divers," said DLNR Aquatic Resources Administrator William Devick. "Our goal is to increase reef fish populations on the windward coastline by providing additional habitat for them."

A variety of fish species will benefit from the reefs including *weke*, *kumu* and *menpachi*. As coral, limu and other organisms grow on artificial reefs, the man-made habitats become able to sustain heavy fishing activity and help relieve fishing pressure on nearby natural reefs.

The Kualoa Artificial Reef was created in 1972 and is the largest established artificial reef site in Hawai'i.

For more information on the Artificial Reef Program contact Brian Kanenaka at 587-0332.

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MEDIA NOTE: Video footage of the barge sinking in Hi-8 format may be available late Wednesday, or by Thursday morning. If interested, please call Deborah Ward at 587-0320.

To learn more about DLNR and its programs, look on the Web at: www.state.hi.us/dlnr/Welcome.html